



Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association, Inc.

Testimony of
The Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association

Before the Connecticut Legislature's Appropriations Committee
March 27, 2009, 1:00p.m.
Room 2C, Legislative Office Building

Re: Bill 828, AAC State Revenue & Open Space Funding

Good afternoon. My name is Richard Audet. I am writing to you in my capacity as a member of the Connecticut Recreation and Park Association's (CRPA) Legislative Committee to respectfully request that you oppose a full diversion of Open Space Funding in the Community Investment Act (CIA) towards balancing the State budget deficit. CRPA members truly understand the magnitude of the current fiscal crisis, therefore we respectfully ask that as much of the open space funds be preserved as is possible.

The Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association represents approximately 700 individuals who represent municipal parks and recreation commissions in almost all 169 communities in Connecticut.

Even in difficult fiscal times, states must make strategic investments in the quality and health of our communities. The CIA, which is highly leveraged by matching funds from communities, is an important, community-based mechanism for doing this. The CIA has helped to fund 330 projects in 130 municipalities in its first 2½ years. This fee surcharge was established, and citizens have paid it, with the understanding that it would go towards these specific purposes. It should not be turned into a general tax. The programs funded by the CIA create and maintain jobs for a wide variety of citizens, including construction workers, farmers, and architects.

Open space land has extrinsic and intrinsic value. It satisfies many human needs: farmlands produce food, lakes and forests provide places where people can recreate, and wetlands help prevent flooding and other natural hazards. Additionally, the economic contributions of public park land and open space are many: they often increase nearby property values (resulting in more property tax revenue to the town), and towns avoid costs associated with providing municipal services to a residential development that might otherwise be located on the site. Reports note that homebuyers are generally willing to pay more for property located close to parks and open space thus providing greater revenues to local economies. Lastly, open spaces support the quality of life factors that can make the difference for communities seeking to attract employers and a strong workforce.

It is clear that the impact of Open Space Funding in the Community Investment Act has real and tangible economic benefits on municipalities. Diverting this funding would be of some assistance to the state budget deficit while being a greater harm to local economies. We strongly believe that any reduction in open space funding that occurs now should be returned to full funding levels as soon as possible. This completes my testimony, thank you for your consideration.

Richard Audet

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